



**COAST GUARD  
MARINE SAFETY OFFICE**

**TOLEDO**

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**MARINE SAFETY INFORMATION BULLETIN 02-05**

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*License and Merchant Mariner Document Processing: Apply Early!*

Due to a historical increase in applications received in the winter months, and a recent change in policy, it is very important to get applications for licenses and merchant mariner documents (MMD), especially renewals, in to Regional Exam Center (REC) Toledo as early as possible. The backlog at REC Toledo usually starts increasing in December and does not decrease to a reasonable level until July. During these times it can take up to eight weeks or longer to process an application. Also, a previously authorized Priority System is no longer in place. Under that system, mariners on vessels used to transport U.S. military cargo and mariners actively sailing at the time of application had, upon receipt of a letter from their employer, some priority over other applicants. The REC is following a strict "First In, First Out" system for applications. There are things mariners can do, however, to help ensure their credentials are renewed before the expiration date of the credential.

Mariners may begin the renewal process as early as one year before the expiration of their credential.<sup>1</sup> If you are concerned about "losing" or "shortening" valid time on your current license or MMD, and are hesitant to start the process early, there is a way you can control the timing of the application process in order to maximize the valid time on your credential. If you were to apply early, and not submit the Issuance Fee with your application, and all other requirements were met, the REC would simply not issue the MMD until it received the Issuance Fee. In other words, the REC would evaluate the renewal application and then send you a letter notifying you that your application had been approved in most respects, and that one of the pending items would be payment of the Issuance Fee. Other possible pending items might be appearance at the REC for fingerprinting, verification of ID, and returning the old MMD (to be destroyed), all of which can be done at the end of the process, and with an appointment, often the same day as receiving the new MMD. This way, you could decide when to send in the Issuance Fee and continue to work under your current MMD. Upon receipt of the Issuance Fee and any other pending items, say, a few days or weeks before the expiration date of the current credential, the REC would then issue the renewed credential.

Mariners can also assist the Coast Guard, and themselves, by reading the application carefully and answering all the questions asked on the form. If you have any questions or concerns about what the form is asking, the REC staff is available to assist you before you sign the form and certify that your answers are true and correct. Delays in the process often occur when an applicant neglects to provide all the required information along with the application.

For more information about obtaining a License or MMD, please visit the U.S. Coast Guard Licensing website at <http://www.uscg.mil/STCW/> or phone the Regional Exam Center in Toledo, Ohio at (419) 418-6010.

  
R. C. PROCTOR

<sup>1</sup> A related rule allows a mariner to apply for renewal of their credential up to a year after the expiration date of their license or MMD. Please note, however, that you may not work under the authority of the credential past its expiration date and that the REC is not authorized to issue temporary licenses or MMDs.